

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2915
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDING CAIRO FOR INFO)

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: IS, US
SUBJECT: ISRAELI OBSERVERS PLEASED WITH BEGIN'S WASHINGTON RECEPTION;
SKEPTICAL OVER RESULTS

1. SUMMARY. REACTIONS TO THE BEGIN-DAYAN DISCUSSIONS
IN WASHINGTON ARE STILL TENTATIVE AND SOMEWHAT CONTRA-
DICTORY. PRESS ACCOUNTS PRAISE PRESIDENT CARTER'S
GRADUOUS WELCOME AND HIS REAFFIRMATION OF U.S.
COMMITMENT TO ISRAEL. THEY ALSO CITE BOTH BEGIN'S AND
DAYAN'S OPTIMISTIC COMMENTS. HOWEVER, EDITORIALS
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ARE GENERALLY MORE SOBER AND SPECULATE THAT THE WARM
WELCOME GIVEN THE ISRAELIS MAY HAVE BEEN LARGELY
TACTICAL IN ORDER TO MEND FENCES WITH THE AMERICAN
JEWISH COMMUNITY RATHER THAN A CONFIRMATION OF
AMERICAN ACCEPTANCE OF THE ISRAELI POSITION. END
SUMMARY.

2. REACTIONS TO THE BEGIN-DAYAN VISITS TO WASHINGTON ARE STILL TENTATIVE AND SOMEWHAT CONTRADICTORY. THIS MAY LARGELY REFLECT THE PAUCITY OF SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON THE CONTENTS OF THE TALKS. THE GLOWING PRESS HEADLINES AND FULL DESCRIPTION OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S REMARKS AT YESTERDAY'S WHITE HOUSE RECEPTION FIND ONLY A FAINT ECHO IN THE EDITORIALS AND COMMENTARIES. PRESS OPINION SEEMS TO BE GROPING FOR A PROPER PERSPECTIVE AND TENDS TO PAY LESS HEED TO THE ATMOSPHERICS OF THE VISITS THAN TO THE SUBSTANCE OF CURRENT US-ISRAELI RELATIONS AND THE STATUS OF THE PEACE PROCESS. ALTHOUGH MOST OBSERVERS ARE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED AT THE PRESIDENT'S LAVISH EXPRESSION OF THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO ISRAEL AND AT THE APPARENT WARMTH OF THE WELCOME EXTENDED TO BEGIN, THERE IS A COMMON FEELING HERE THAT THE WHITE HOUSE'S EFFUSIVE HOSPITALITY WAS PRIMARILY A FENCE-MENDING EFFORT WITH THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY; AND WHILE APPRECIATIVE REFERENCES WERE ALSO MADE TO THE PRESIDENT'S SUNDAY TIMES INTERVIEW, IT IS VIEWED BY AMNY AS ALBEIT UNUSUALLY GRACIOUS SCENE-SETTER FOR BEGIN'S VISIT BUT WITHOUT SPECIFIC POLICY CONTENT. SEVERAL COMMENTARIES POINT TO THE PERSISTENCE OF US-ISRAELI DIFFERENCES, NOTING THE BREVITY OF THE BEGIN-CARTER SUBSTANTIVE TALKS (30 MINUTES) AS EVIDENCE THAT NO BREAKTHROUGH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAS OCCURRED.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, A FEATURE ARTICLE IN YEDIOT AHARONOT REPORTS THE OPTIMISM WHICH BEGIN CONVEYED TO REPORTERS ACCOMPANYING HIM ON HIS PLANE TO LOS ANGELES. BEGIN VOICED BELIEF IN THE POSSIBILITY OF A BREAKTHROUGH THAT COULD REVIVE NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT AND INDICATED THAT SUCH NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BE BASED ON HIS ORIGINAL SELF-RULE PLAN FOR THE WEST BANK. HE CHALKED UP FOUR RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS REGARDING HIS GOVERNMENT STAND ON THE WEST BANK (SEE TODAY'S TEL AVIV MEDIA REACTION CABLE). BEGIN ASCRIBED THE GAINS TO "OUR FIRM RESOLVE AND THE MUTUAL DESIRE TO GET THINGS GOING". HE CREDITED PRESIDENT CARTER WITH CHANGING THE ATMOSPHERE AND ADDED THAT THE VANCE-DAYAN TALKS HAD ALSO CONTRIBUTED GREATLY. IN OTHER COLUMNS, HOWEVER, A MARKED DEGREE OF SKEPTICISM IS EVIDENT. FOR EXAMPLE, SOME COMMENTATORS DISCERN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DAYAN'S QUALIFIED UP-BEAT REMARKS ABOUT HIS WASHINGTON TALKS AND VANCE'S MORE RESTRAINED CHARACTERIZATION OF THE MEETINGS. ONE COLUMNIST CAUTIONED HIS READERS

THAT THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT HAS A HISTORY OF PUTTING A MORE OPTIMISTIC FACE ON HIGH LEVEL MEETINGS THAN IS WARRANTED AND CITED BEGIN'S DECEMBER MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT AND THE ISMALIA SUMMIT AS EXAMPLES.

4. THE EDITORIAL PAGES WERE PARTICULARLY SOBER TODAY. IN ROUGHLY PARALLES PIECES HAARETZ ("BEGIN'S OPPORTUNITY") AND THE JERUSALEM POST ("BEGIN'S CHALLENGE") DECLARED THAT THIS GOVERNMENT MUST COME UP WITH NEW IDEAS FOR THE WEST BANK AND A NEW DRAMATIC ASSERTION OF ISRAEL'S READINESS TO CONCLUDE PEACE WITH EGYPT.
VIETS

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